

James K. A. Smith and Amos Young, eds., *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010).

James K.A. Smith and Amos Yong note that for many scholars, pentecostalism is seldom associated with scientific competency and progress (1). Despite this opinion, Smith and Yong assert that the relationships between the “pentecostal worldview” and science are in fact complex (2). *Science and the Spirit* represents one of the first systematic efforts to explore these diverse science-religion convergences. Intended to be a textbook for pentecostal undergraduates, it features ten papers from eleven scholars with academic backgrounds in theology and science, as well as the social sciences. This work is the product of a multi-year research initiative, and it sets out to boldly answer such pertinent questions as: “Can a pentecostal worldview ...inhabit the same world and the same cultural space as naturalistic science?” “Must Pentecostalism entail what most would expect—a head-in-the-sand ignoring of science, or worse, an anti-intellectual rejection of science?” “Can science enjoy and gain from a mutual dialogue with pentecostalism?” (2-3).

When considering the worldwide growth and influence of pentecostalism, it is evident that answering such questions adds a relevant and necessary perspective to the corpus of science-religion research. In order to address these manifold queries *Science and the Spirit* is subdivided into three major sections. The first of these deals with what Smith and Yong describe as “‘meta’ reflections

on the big questions” (5). This includes an opening chapter that presents representative models of how pentecostals can respond to scientific knowledge, and further proposes ways in which pentecostal theological frameworks and science can be mutually beneficial. The next two chapters consider confluences of science with naturalism, as well as paradigms of divine action. Like the initial chapter, these communicate that science and pentecostalism are not necessarily incompatible, and they detail how pentecostals can freely engage in science while also contributing unique perspectives to science-religion discourse.

The second section consists of four chapters that juxtapose pentecostalism with physics, biology, cognitive neuroscience, and psychiatry. The conclusions of this section parallel that of the first, and serve to reinforce a complementary pentecostalism and science relationship, while simultaneously responding to counter-pentecostal suppositions. Notably, dysteleological perceptions of evolution, reductive materialism in neuroscience, and psychiatric diagnoses of religion as a psychopathology are scrutinized. Finally, the third section incorporates three chapters that evaluate pentecostalism in correlation with the “human and technological sciences” (5). This expands the text’s overarching pentecostal and science harmony/integration premise, focusing on issues related to anthropology, sociology, and new technologies. In these final chapters the potential for pentecostalism’s enhancement of, and integration with, anthropology and sociology

are pursued. Also, the appropriation of new technologies by pentecostal communities is examined, and principles for suitable pentecostal technology employment are advanced.

Cumulatively, these three sections explore numerous themes in contemporary science-religion research, and encourage pentecostals not only to accept science, but also to participate critically in its enterprises. However, the chapters often do not delve into great depth concerning wider science-religion scholarship. This may simply reflect the fact that *Science and the Spirit* was written primarily as a textbook for undergraduates, and was not necessarily designed to be a rigorous academic text. Its style and content is suitable for this purpose, although readers unfamiliar with pentecostal theology and praxis may find themselves somewhat disconnected from Yong's considerations of "pneumatological theology" (58) or Tedford Work's statements about God being "our beginning and our end, our creating Father and our indwelling Holy Spirit" (20). With this in mind, Smith and Yong's introduction would have greatly benefited from a thorough treatment of what is meant by *science* and *pentecostalism*. Also, a succinct preamble on major premises in science-religion discourse, such as proposed taxonomies for science-religion interactions, would have situated the book within a broader research context (77-105). Though these ideas are engaged throughout the book's chapters, it seems haphazard to begin an undergraduate textbook without defining the terminology from the outset.

Furthermore, because the book is written specifically for pentecostals it often resembles a religious apologetic. Though the authors acknowledge areas of dissonance between pentecostalism and science, the unmistakable goal of each chapter is to demonstrate that pentecostals *can* be scientific, and to accentuate pentecostalism's theoretical ability to accept and potentially influence various scientific fields. This relates to numerous comments which sometimes come across as naïvely pro-pentecostal or even elitist. For instance, Wolfgang Vondey explains that "The Spirit-filled [pentecostal] physicist is perhaps the image that best represents the reconciled unity of physics and theology," in contradistinction to the "'natural' and the 'carnal' scientist" who may not be able "to discern the hidden things of the world, since those things are revealed only through the Spirit of God" (87).

Additionally, certain chapters contain particularly less cogent theses than others. For example, in Vondey's discussion of physics and pentecostalism he implies that Newton and Einstein's individual views of the "spirit" entail its use within contemporary scientific analysis. This thesis is developed through deficient correlations derived from an apparent insensitivity to context and anachronism. Furthermore, while Steve Badger and Mike Tenneson's chapter on biological evolution provides revealing insights into pentecostal views on origins, it includes problematic statements relating to intelligent design theory. For instance, they assert that, in relation to William Dembski's intelligent design hypotheses, "Statis-

tical analyses of DNA support this position” (100). However, such ID claims are not actually supported by data, or the vast majority of scientists. In association with this they also make latent comments that imply an uncertainty about biological evolution. “Students and teachers of biology must understand and use evolutionary theory,” they explain, “even if its reality is doubted” (100).

Despite these shortfalls, the book successfully communicates that pentecostalism and science need not be at odds. Indeed, *Science and the Spirit*’s value lies in its efforts to mediate pentecostalism with science, and demonstrate to pentecostals that numerous constructive intersections may exist between the two. As such it represents a positive move towards pentecostal dialogue, understanding, and increased participation with the natural and human sciences.

Reviewed by Thomas Aechtner
Exeter College, University of Oxford